

# **THE GOLDEN MOON.**

**BY EDWARD IRENAEUS STEVENSON.**

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## **THE GOLDEN MOON.**

**To H. H. F.**

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**I.**

### **THE ADVENTURE ON LOSTWHITTLE LAKE.**

Lostwhittle Lake, an inlet from the sea, boasted only five miles as its length, and about half that stretch at its widest diameter. Just at the latter point, East Belleport flourished like a green bay tree. The East Belleport Collegiate Academy was as flourishing as the little town itself.

"Every boy who is anybody," Dennis Jerrold used to assert, "goes to the Academy." I don't know that this rather snobbish classification was the truth, but, at any rate, there were a hundred and twenty lads, of all ages, temperaments, sizes, and degrees of taste for arithmetic, algebra, and that particularly juicy account of his wars in Gaul for which the great Julius Caesar is responsible. "They killed him because he wrote it," Leigh Burrage affirmed, "and it's no wonder."

On a certain delightful Saturday morning in September, the aforesaid Dennis, with Leigh Burrage, Cyrus Barras, and Pennington Harkness, which four, it may be mentioned, formed a clique of their own at the Academy, were drifting slowly about the upper waters of the lake. The wind had died away. The blue of the midday sky, and the intense green of the gloomy hills, closing together where the lake finally narrowed into a deep and winding creek, were dazzlingly

reflected in the water. But it was too hot for the unsuccessful fishing party to admire the picturesque.

"Ph-e-w!" exclaimed Cyrus, looking across to the rest, and dropping his hook and bait abruptly; "this is no sort of a day for fishing! Let's give it up, and pull over to the west shore yonder, where Hawk's Hill comes down to the water's edge; I bet you we shall find a shady place for luncheon! There are no end of old pines growing clear down to the beach."

"I'm with you, most noble general," assented Pennington. "We shall be baked if we dawdle in this neighborhood much longer, and I'd rather blister my hands rowing than stand this sun indefinitely. I never was over on that strip of the shore, either."

Dennis and Leigh agreed that the prospects of better piscatorial luck were more than doubtful, that they were losing half the holiday in courting it, and, last but not least, the four felt that some nourishment was now desirable. The "Lovely Anna" was headed for the distant west shore, and as a hot light wind suddenly rose, lifting with it something like thunder-caps over the tops of the mountains, pulling was not necessary, and Hawk's Hill, dark and cool-looking, began to loom up apace.

"Wouldn't it be stunning," Leigh remarked, as the boat sped along, "if East Belleport was anything of a place for navigation? Just imagine the lake between the town and the shore all full of shipping, and a jolly little custom-house and revenue officers in uniform, and that sort of thing! It seems such a shame for us to be so close to the ocean—look at it," he added, pointing straight down the lake to where, through the Score, its outlet, the open sea was glistening—"and nothing but a handful of schooners and sloops alongside the docks."

"It would, indeed," assented Dennis, "and you know people thought it was going to be so, once upon a time."

"When?" asked Pen, who was a comparatively new arrival in the place.

"Why, just after the Revolution," exclaimed Dennis. "Father says that the Government thought that they would make a first-class port of entry here, and General Washington laid all sorts of plans about dredging out the bar in the Score and straightening the channel; and father told me that it could easily have been done at any time until within the last twenty-five years. But the project never came to anything, and now the Score is so tricky and shallow that it would be almost impossible to clear it up if they wanted to, and the bar is as bad as you like. So I guess East Belleport will have to stick to the sardine trade and the factories for excitement."

"All ashore!" rang Cyrus's voice, cutting short Dennis's bits of history. The "Lovely Anna" was almost aground in silver sand. A narrow beach, behind which waved the tall chestnut and pine trees springing up from the mountain's foot, lay before the party. The somber mountain sloped abruptly to the sky, back of all. A fallen cedar-trunk afforded the boys a natural dock, and, in high spirits, they left the boat with two baskets of gracious aspect.

"All the fish in the lake may live a day longer, so far as concerns me!" declared Cyrus, while the quartet pressed through a narrow belt of brush to the expected shade. "I only hope that this breeze will keep up so that we can leave the oars on the thwarts going home. Let's see what time it is. One o'clock already."

"I'm to meet my father in the office at three, remember," said Dennis, depositing his basket on a mossy stone, well within the overarching belt of pines, while the others threw themselves down beside it and eyed it lovingly; "so we haven't so much time to enjoy ourselves. Sandwiches, Cy? Leigh, get the cork out of those pickles, please. Stop, Pen! you're turning a custard pie right upside down."

With plenty of talk and laughter interspersed, the four cronies proceeded with their repast. The solitary spot, with its view of the lake glinting between the tall trunks and stunted undergrowth, probably never echoed with even so much stir. The squirrels ventured some sharpshooting at the boys with acorns from overhead, in disgust at their gay invasion. High in air, a fish hawk sailed past from his airy nest, over the lonely marge; and the lap-lap of the wavelets filled in any rare silences.

"What a queer kind of a corner of the shore this is!" presently Dennis exclaimed. "I wonder that nobody ever comes here. I've always wanted to. Just the place for the school picnic! Do you know if there is any road coming down over the mountain to where we are?"

"No, this is the foot of a regular wilderness," Cyrus answered. "I don't know to whom it all belongs—it's nothing but forest for miles inland until you come to one of the turnpikes. The land—"

"Is mine, gentlemen!" spoke a deep voice behind them, so suddenly and so startlingly that it is not to their discredit that they, with common consent, arrested all morsels half way to their lips, uttered a general exclamation of astonishment, and sprang, two of them at least, to their feet. They were no longer alone, and how long the extraordinary fifth member of the group had been included in it, no one could tell.

Facing them and the sea, with his arms folded in military style, was standing motionless and gazing at them intently a tall, slender man in full Continental uniform. Its silver was tarnished, and its stuff rent in more than one place. He who wore it seemed, perhaps, sixty years of age, for all his erectness and the deep bronze color in his face. It was a strangely handsome face, too; a grave mouth, a Roman nose; and the deep blue eyes, bent now on this one of the lads, now on that, were brilliant and proud. A sword dangled at his side in a rusted scabbard.

For a few seconds neither he nor the bewildered picnic party staring into his face spoke. Then, in the same strange accent—decidedly English—in which he had so startled the lads with his interruption of Cyrus, he asked, turning to Dennis, with a bow of old-fashioned ceremony, "Is yonder community, sir, which I see toward the south, the town of Belleport's Cove?"

During the Revolutionary War, and some years succeeding, Belleport's Cove had been the accepted name of the old settlement.

"Yes, sir; that is, it's the same thing—East Belleport, sir," replied Dennis, reluctant to speak.

"Ah, East Belleport. I am your debtor, sir," the stranger returned, adding, in a melancholy tone, as if to himself, "Ever changing, ever changing! So Warren used to say! Will you also inform me whether Belleport's Co—I should say East Belleport is a port of entry, and if there is much navigation in these waters at present, sir?"

At this curious second question neither Dennis nor Pen could repress another start. It was a direct allusion to the very topic which had come up as the "Lovely Anna" made her way to the scene of this inexplicable adventure!

"It is not, sir," said Dennis. "Cochin, five miles below here, is the custom-house."

"Lake Winchipog must then be a deserted inlet, so far as the great world is concerned," came the grave voice, musingly. "Ay—the same old dilatoriness—ever the same idle talk, with little action!"

"Lake—I think you called it something beside Lostwhittle, sir?" Dennis said.

"I know no such name as Lostwhittle," the unknown speaker replied. "'Tis, however, no marvel if Winchipog, too, has exchanged the old sachem's noble name for some English one. Lostwhittle? Ah," he continued, raising his hand and pointing out over the water, "lost, indeed! lost—but to be found by whom it shall be."

Like a flash, the recollection entered Pen's mind that on the quaint Continental survey-maps, stored in the county court-house at East Belleport, the lake was actually called by this early Indian name, "Winchipog". A tribe had once inhabited its shores, and fished in its salt waves. Pen glanced at the dark face, the antique uniform of the man, if man he were, who thus knew the lake only by that disused name. The boy shivered nervously. What could it all mean?

"Once more let me apologize for detaining you from your refreshment," said the tall man, with another formal bow. He appeared to be struck with the ordinary nineteenth century clothing which the group before him wore, and his eye ran

over its details curiously, as he hesitated an instant. "I should be glad to know whether any of you are aware of the depth of the water in the creek in the immediate vicinity of the bold rock known as the Chief's Foot."

The boys exchanged questioning looks. The puzzle grew denser. What an extraordinary interrogation, and to what might it be a preface?

"No, sir, I don't think we do," responded Dennis, acting as spokesman. "The creek is squally, and pretty gloomy, and the hills begin so close to the banks that there is nothing to see when you get up there by the big rock. We very seldom row or sail so far. The fishing is poor, and the region is all as wild as possible."

"I have heard some of the hotel boatmen and fishing folks say that the creek was remarkably deep, considering its breadth, almost all the way up," Pen ventured this statement. Leigh and Cyrus stood a few steps further, staring in a curiosity quite as overpowering as their fellows.

"You are all familiar with the rock itself?" The strange speaker leaned forward with a tinge of excitement coming into his voice.

"Yes, sir."

"And you judge that there have been no recent examinations of the bottom, or soundings taken close about it? It is well. Gentlemen," he continued, "I do not know you; neither do you know me. It matters not how or whence I am come here. Enough to say, that I can reveal to you a secret, a secret known only to myself, which I will share gladly and freely with you."

He drew his sword with difficulty from its sheath. Was he actually a new Rip Van Winkle? thought Dennis, as he watched the action, and he braced himself, not knowing but that the sword was to be raised against the party.

The hilt was extended toward himself, the first.

"Promise me solemnly, upon your sacred honors and this loyal blade, never voluntarily to reveal without my permission what I wish to confide to you," the bearer of the sword said, his eyes meeting theirs in turn as they stood about him. "The secret I intrust is dearly attained, and honor must dearly guard it."

I will not say that these four lads yet were considering their adventure as partaking of the supernatural. It is true that they were familiar with many of the legends clustering about Lostwhittle or "Winchipog" localities: the Hessian horseman who gallops across the green every seven years at cockcrow, the burning British frigate that tradition has seen floating just to the seaside of the Score, the haunted peak just visible on the hill-chain where the Spanish buccaneers still are said to defend a mighty treasure from commonplace discovery.

But this! This might any moment explain itself as some shocking practical joke!

Dennis had, perhaps, more faith in the romance of the adventure than either of the rest. Tremblingly he put out his hand and touched the sword.

"I—promise," he said, fascinated by the keen eyes eagerly meeting his own.

"One!" counted the weird voice. "Remember that circumstances may later make it impossible, nay, needless, for you to attempt to hide this afternoon's trust. But until such moments come, woe to him who betrays. Woe!"

Leigh came closer to Dennis, and with an embarrassed laugh carelessly said, "I promise." He thought, "Well, it all seems so like a bit out of a story, so far, that I'd hate to have it end up in some every-day style after this." Cyrus and Pen pledged themselves also, glancing half-frightened into the dark face of its recipient. Were they all dreaming?

The sword clashed into its sheath. "Thank you, gentlemen," said the stranger. "I will now trouble you to give me your attention. I have your promises to secrecy, remember," he continued, drawing back and again folding his arms as he leaned against one of the blasted pine trees, "and thus I keep mine. My name is Colonel Constantine."

## II.

### THE SECRET OF THE MOON.

As if at the mention of some charmed name, the wind whistled sharply through the trees and a film of gray began stealing inward over the Lostwhittle surface.

"In the month of November, 1780, a British sloop, bound from Halifax to the town of Newport, reached this point of the coast, hotly pursued by an American vessel. At the time, Admiral Arbuthnot was blockading the harbor of Newport. The English bark bore dispatches to him.

"Finding, by sunset, that the American ship gained remorselessly upon him, and, being misled by one of his charts, the captain of the British vessel hastily turned into the Score and made all sail through the lake for the creek. This, he believed, was simply another outlet to the ocean. He soon discovered his fatal mistake. The American pursuers came sweeping up to the attack. Their prey was in a veritable net. Accordingly, Captain Gladd, of the British craft, abandoned hope of further flight, and, proceeding no further up the creek than opposite the huge projecting rock known to this day as the Chief's Foot, he awaited the boarding party with desperate courage."

The group who listened with quickly-beating hearts and wide-open young eyes to this exciting preface, as it seemed, to Colonel Constantine's secret, offered a contrast to the speaker himself. He had closed his eyes, looking into theirs only now and then. His tone had become like that of one reciting a page from some chivalrous chronicle. The air grew gradually closer, the sky darker.

"The American foemen were not acquainted, however, with a fact that would have doubled their desire to capture the prize. A Halifax merchant had

bequeathed to a young officer in his Majesty's pay and of Admiral Arbuthnot's staff, a service of gold and silver plate of the value of several thousand pounds. Eager to receive this legacy, the young man had foolishly begged that it might be forwarded to him by the first dispatch-bark leaving Halifax for Newport. His friends had obeyed his wish, and the very sloop now brought to bay in Lostwhittle Creek by the American "Yankee Bride" contained in an unoccupied cabin some strong wooden cases inclosing the precious consignment.

"The onslaught was not more terrible than the resistance it encountered. Man after man who leaped from the boats of the "Yankee Bride" to the British deck was struck down. Wild cries and the clash of cutlasses and smoke from muskets filled the evening air. Outside the Score, the last touch of the scarlet sun was visible above the sea. But the American force was superior in numbers and activity. The British captain had foreseen the outcome, and, before the fray began, won the consent of his determined little band of heroes to a last resort. The vessel was already scuttled below. He now fired it above. With her rigging blazing, and shouts of terror and triumph intermingled from the contending forces, the sloop, with all on board, and that secret cargo of gold and silver, sank in the twilight.

"The evening was cold, the waters high. The enemies were almost locked in each other's arms. Some dozen of the crew of the "Yankee Bride" were rescued from the freezing waves. Of the British, two sailors and Captain Gladd alone were seen and captured. Captain Gladd lay in an American prison for months.

"In that prison, and after he was exchanged from it back into the King's navy, Captain Gladd became certain that the young officer to whom he had been bearing that rich cargo had either disappeared forever or been killed in action. At all events, every trace of him was lost. Furthermore, he had no relations nor

intimate friends, and Captain Gladd shortly became assured that he himself was the sole possessor of the secret of the legacy's whereabouts.

"When the Revolution closed, Captain Gladd came and settled in a rude camp on the shore of the creek. Ten followers were his companions in the attempt to raise the sunken vessel for their own profit. They discovered her, and, acting upon the plans of their leader, they moved her masts and rigging, and were preparing to float the hull as well as save the treasure, of which only Gladd still knew. A pestilence invaded their huts. Gladd and every man engaged with him perished. Deep in the edge of the wilderness, below Dark Mountain, you can trace the ruins of their shelters to-day."

"But," cried Cyrus, unable to restrain himself longer, "do you mean that—" The weird informant made a gesture commanding silence.

"In the rush of events succeeding to the Newport blockade, the circumstance of the battle between the two barks in Lostwhittle Creek was absolutely forgotten. No record of the fate of the gallant Britisher is to be found in print to-day. No one ever continued the bold scheme Gladd designed. He alone seems to have understood what was to be won by it.

"Gentlemen," and here the mysterious stranger's voice grew low and something like a thrill pervaded it, "gentlemen, it matters not whether Constantine be my proudest name, nor how I, of all the world, am the possessor to-day of this great secret. You must also wonder in vain, for I shall not tell you, why I have chosen you, young, gallant, and resolute, to share it at last with me. But I solemnly assure you, pledged as you are to preserve it, nay, if you will, at liberty to use this mystery for your own advantage, that on the bottom of Lostwhittle Creek,

the depth and loneliness of which has preserved intact the golden freight to this day, rests the ill-fated "Golden Moon"!"

"The "Golden Moon"! The "Golden Moon"!" cried the four listeners together. Their heads were giddy with the rush of excited ideas. The crowning addition had been those words, *"Nay, if you will, at liberty to use at for your own advantage."*

But at the same instant with the culminating disclosure and the boys' exclamation, a flash of vivid lightning, to which a thunderclap succeeded, awoke them all from romance to reality. The storm, sweeping stealthily down from those wild gorges where the "Golden Moon" sank, was furiously upon them. The rain fell in sheets. The lake surged and rolled beneath the whish of the wind. In the half-explored group of peaks separating the head-waters of the creek and its region from the ocean, tradition reported that the spirits of Indian braves and Revolutionary worthies not only delighted to walk, but to breed and muster, in some unearthly way, the sudden squalls and thunder-storms which were heard rattling in the north.

"The boat! the boat!" exclaimed Dennis. He was the first to turn his back upon Colonel Constantine, and then rushed away as he saw the "Lovely Anna's" doubtful security. Cyrus, calling something to the rest about "staying behind", followed Dennis. Pen attempted to do so, but with his first step saw his watch lying on his jacket, and halted to catch it up, while Leigh, in wheeling round, sunk his heel in a soft spot on the moss and fell flat.

"No! no! She's all right!" called Dennis to Cyrus from the "Anna". "Quick! let's get back to him!"

In the full face of the pelting shower the two came running into cover. Involuntarily each, crouching under the overhanging foliage, now looked about for Colonel Constantine.

In vain did they peer around in the deluge. He had disappeared with its advent! The thunder and rain shortly diminished. The sun appeared with marvelous quickness. The lads searched their resting-place for hundreds of yards surrounding the spot where their visitant had stood to unburden himself of his great secret.

They thrashed about in the wet thicket, they looked for footprints on the beach, they scaled trees, and followed up any hints at a path. All to no purpose!

During the single instant of their nervous confusion and the descent of the storm, to which his disclosure seemed to have given the signal, Colonel Constantine had vanished, to a degree for which nothing short of actual disembodiment appeared accountable.

He had disappeared after having confided to four nineteenth-century boys, schoolfellows in the East Belleport Collegiate Academy, the wondrous secret of a sunken treasure washed over by the waves of Lostwhittle Creek—scarcely two miles from where they stood trembling in this moment to think of it.

Were they under a delusion? or had a spirit given up the fact into their keeping? Whether or no, they were pledged to retain it.

"I tell you, I don't know what to think," replied Pen to Cyrus, as they approached East Belleport on the way home. He used the words for something like the twentieth time since they had entered the wet boat and headed the

"Lovely Anna" back. Literally, they none of them "knew what to think". They were already worn out with exciting discussion.

"Well," said Dennis, cheerfully, "I know very well what is the best thing for me to do, and I don't doubt that you will all follow my example. I propose to tell my father everything that has occurred, directly I can have him alone long enough to do it. He's the man for me!"

"But you can't do anything of the kind," objected Cyrus, Leigh, and Pen, very quickly. "You'll break our promise! You forget that!"

Dennis turned to them in amazement. "Why, you surely don't think that Colonel Constantine intended us to keep so important a thing from our *fathers*! We boys? none of us anywhere near of age! I don't believe it," he concluded, contemptuously.

"None of us of age! And what of that? Do people have to be of age to come into possession of secrets that can be their own business?" Cyrus demanded, sharply.

"Or is it an understood matter that every single thing which a fellow hears that is worth letting out, or anyway curious, he's bound to explain to his father and mother until he's past twenty-one years of age?" asked Burrage, less hotly, but quite in a decisive tone.

"My father never brought me up that way," laughed Cyrus, somewhat sneeringly.

"Nor mine, either!" retorted Dennis, the color rising in his fine face. "But isn't it common sense that when boys no older than us four here are all upset over any

occurrence, when they don't know what to make of it, or whether it is worth giving a second thought to—why, what in the world is sensible for them to do but to go and get our governors to throw some light on it? They can; or if they can't, nobody can."

"Sweet, frank boy, go and tell his father when he don't know what else to do," came Cyrus's second sneer. Yet Cyrus was not a 'pushing' boy, nor a bad-hearted one, nor one who hid his doings from home eyes. He was only carried away by the thought of the "Golden Moon" and a false sense of manly honor and his own dignity.

"Yes, Cy," Dennis replied, striking his fist on the gunwale, "or tell his mother, either! I don't care what you say; that's my way of thinking. Of course, though," he added, more compliantly, "a promise is a promise, and if you all insist that it's going to bind you so closely as this, why, I'll keep still like the rest of you, and not breathe a syllable to father or mother or any of the people."

"Certainly Colonel Constantine took us for and called us men—gentlemen, not mere boys," Cyrus put in, doggedly. When Cyrus once made up his mind that an affair must go so or so, it was a miracle if his pride allowed him to alter his sentiments. He piqued himself on "always seeing right straight into the plainest course of action", as he sometimes mentioned. "I, for my part, regard my word as sacred. If any of us does not, why, I have my opinion of him as a gentleman."

Here occurred a short silence.

Pennington was a good deal of Dennis's way of thinking. Naturally excitable, the adventure had told upon him, and he would willingly have invoked some experienced judgment to either explain Colonel Constantine's origin and

presence or decide whether his extraordinary communication ought to be acted upon. But Leigh was Pen's model and *fidus Achalis*. It wouldn't do to differ with Leigh. So Pen filled in the pause with a hesitating:

"I must say that I agree with Leigh. I should consider it just as much breaking my word to tell the folks at the house as the Government. And, at any rate, I don't see that at present older heads can be of special use to us. The first thing we must do is to sound the creek."

"I'm with you there!" accorded Leigh. "To the creek we must go instanter. We know the general locality well enough. We can take one of the boats on Monday afternoon, and—well, there's no telling what may be the result! Oh, fellows, think of it! if we find the hull of the "Golden Moon" where it has lain all these years without a living creature knowing of it!"

No danger of the argument about promise-keeping and fathers recurring now. Cyrus recognized that with relief. Besides, from that sentence of Leigh's this story of Colonel Constantine's confiding was accepted as a fact—until it should be disproved. It would be a small expenditure of trouble to determine the great central feature of it. The mystery of his coming, his knowledge, and his disappearance was dropped for the present. Everybody plunged into a deep discussion of the Monday's arrangements.

The "Lovely Anna" came within a hundred yards of the pier.

"It's settled that we go up there after school on Monday," Cyrus said, conclusively.

He added to Dennis, who had promised the "Lovely Anna" as the usual stand-by of their expeditions, "And as for that point you raised, why, don't you see, Dennis, that there's no need of breaking our words until we have something more to let out, maybe need advice about? Monday will decide that, and it would be absurd to be so hasty to-day. I'm sure I'd rather work as much of the puzzle out by myself, like a man, as I can before turning to other folks."

"Very well," said Dennis, slowly. "I'll do what the rest of you do, of course. Mum's the word." That clause, "by myself, like a man," stung him. He had quite as much regard for his dignity in the clique as Cyrus.

"United we stand, divided we fall," rhymed Leigh, staving off from a mooring. The boat glided up to the nearest steps, Dennis made her fast, and they scrambled out, feeling as if they had lived a month since ten o'clock in the morning. As they walked up the dock a fisherman asked:

"Where'd ye all get so wet, boys?"

Dennis answered, "A storm up the lake."

"H'm!" quoth the other, Joe Bonnycross by name, and a special admirer of Cyrus, "I wisht ye'd a-fetched it with ye. We've had no drop of it here, and it's terrible dry in my patch."

The boys exchanged quick glances.

That evening Mrs. Jerrold said to her husband, just as they were getting ready for going upstairs to bed, "Father, did you notice how very quiet Dennis was all through supper? He hardly spoke a word, and I thought he looked positively

pale. These hot Saturday morning excursions tire these boys a great deal more than they think."

Nor was that the only house in the village where sharp eyes detected queer things.

"I declare," laughed Cyrus Burrage's older brother, as he came downstairs after supper, "Cy is the most comical fellow. He went upstairs half an hour ago, you recollect, saying he was 'dead tired out' and wanted to 'go to bed'. He sat down on the edge of the bed, and managed to pull one boot and one leg of his trousers off; then he fell into a regular brown-study, and there he has been sitting ever since, until I walked into his room again just now. What ails the youngster?"

The "youngster"—Cy was sixteen, and would have contested the pet name savagely—was thinking about the creek and Monday. Across the square, Dennis was lying broad awake in his bed, busy on the same subject for meditation, and doing a little reflection upon "honor" at the same time.

### III.

#### DISCOVERY.

"Cy! Pen! All of you! Hullo! Hullo-oa! Come over here—quick!"

Dennis's voice rang like a trumpet through the quiet woods. The three lads called stumbled in the dense undergrowth to reach him. What *had* he brought to light?

It was Monday, and school, relentless school, itself had favored them. Their division had been dismissed at noon to let the carpenters attack part of the Academy's roof through their class-room. By a quarter to one o'clock they were under way in the "Lovely Anna".

There was some sharp discussion as to whether they had not best, first of all, revisit the scene of yesterday's encounter. That idea fell through.

"For my part," declared Cyrus, "I can't think of anything now except Captain Gladd's camp and the hull of the ship."

Nobody cared to admit that somehow or other the wooded foot of Hawk's Hill had wrapped a disagreeably ghostly atmosphere about itself, and that to face its mysterious shades again was a suggestion trying to the nerves.

From the instant that the "Lovely Anna" glided into the creek, drawing nearer every yard to the broad stretch opposite the lichen-covered Chief's Foot, that easy-sailing boat's course became erratic.

"Now, look here," Dennis finally exclaimed, looking up as he realized that neither he nor any one else was doing anything but stare at the water, "we may just as well postpone all this sort of thing. The land's to come first, you know, and the light strikes the ripples exactly the wrong way now. The business is altogether too important for us not to have some system in it. In an hour the sunlight will fall exactly right. We shall only waste time by floating about here now."

Unwillingly, Cyrus, Pen, and Leigh yielded. They sprang ashore. Then began an examination of every square rood of ground bordering the wide creek. At first there were "oh's" and "ah's" that rallied them breathlessly together to try and look on prostrate trunks and natural depressions in the rank soil as worm-eaten sills and the traces of cellars. But they were sensible as well as excited, and such delusions were gradually dismissed and made light of.

Thrashing about in stiff underbrush, clambering over stumps and stones, is exhausting work, especially when you are more or less uncertain whether what you look for existed tolerably close to the field of your operations or ever existed at all.

Dennis's shout awakened new hope in the hearts of the scattered trio, who, dispirited as to Captain Gladd's track, were aching to leap into the "Anna" and concentrate their efforts on the grand feature of Colonel Constantine's story. This wandering around in the wilderness was absurd.

"Have you found anything?" Pen demanded, breathlessly hurrying forward.

"What on earth is it?" called Cyrus, appearing from behind a cedar.

"Look around you!" returned Dennis, with almost solemnity. "Don't you see? This must have been the place. Oh, fellows!"

It was plainly an artificial clearing of perhaps two hundred feet square into which Dennis had summoned them. Of course stout saplings, bushes, and low shrubbery, bramble-tangles, and tall weeds grew everywhere. But the decided want of old trees in a space so rectangular, and the rotten stumps discoverable here and there, indisputably told of the toil of some early sappers, whose axes were rust and their bones dust long ago.

Nor was this all. Dennis pointed to a spot which at first seemed abandoned to ferns and milkweed and thistles.

"It's what's left of a chimney!" he said, his eyes shining with triumph. "Don't you see the bricks are half covered with earth? There are lots more scattered close about, I haven't a doubt. And somewhere there was a hearth, I'm certain."

They all threw themselves down beside it.

"Yes, *sir*!" Cyrus assented, after due examination and expressions of opinion. "This was one of the old Captain's houses."

"Probably they didn't need more than two," Pen observed.

"No, they wouldn't. They might have got on very well with one, for that matter, for don't you remember he said that there 'were only a handful of men in the enterprise'?"

Colonel Constantine had become "he" and "him" to the treasure-seekers.

"But I don't see why there is nothing like a cellar left," Burrage remarked, as they stood reverently surveying the mass of burnt bricks, a good number of which still adhered together by the mortar that Captain Gladd's trowels had spread.

"Cellar? Why, they likely didn't dig one. We were geese to look for cellars at all! What did men who lived as they did want with a cellar, I should like to know? They didn't use ice-boxes."

"No, that's so!" Leigh admitted, to this explanation of Pen. "They lived a rude, wild life, of course, in a temporary cabin."

"Hul-lo—hul-lo!" echoed a call from Cyrus, who had been groping in the grass and weeds. New fuel to the fire was added.

"Found anything more?"

"You don't mean it."

"Oh!"

"What can *that* be?"

"Do let us see what the thing is!"

In high triumph Cyrus drew away from the foot of an oak stump. Dennis, Leigh, and Pen knelt beside it.

Sunk into the wood by time and corrosion was a strong iron chain, brown with rust. It was still united around what had once been the living trunk, and from the rusty girdle two or three links hung downward. Only a keen eye would have observed any peculiarity about the stump; Cyrus felt his flitting jealousy of his friend Dennis's discovery depart as he saw the enthusiasm centered now on himself.

"Part of their tackle, certainly," Dennis said, decisively. "Oh, there can hardly be any failure as to the hull itself now."

They were all in the boat fifteen minutes after this reminder. It came irresistibly even to methodical Dennis, and a longer stay on land revealed nothing more to the purpose. They felt that they had gathered enough testimony from the woods.

The supreme question was now to be met. "Opposite the Chief's Foot" was their only guide; and the shiftings which tides and the slow action of the currents, the deposits of years in the way of sand and sea-weed, all the sea change which scores of seasons must have made in the position and look of the sloop's hull lying in deep water, were to be allowed for.

Fortunately the creek was noted in geological reports of the State for its rocky bottom and comparative freedom from alluvial matter. Its remarkable depth was coupled with a really wonderful clearness. As the "Lovely Anna", her sail furled, was rowed from the shore, the crew saw that the sun was now, true to Dennis's predictions, exactly at the proper angle to the water to aid their examinations.

"Somebody must pull the boat," said Cyrus; "we can't all do the looking." Cyrus's tone implied his preference for "doing the looking" rather than the

pulling; though, to allow him justice, I do not think he would have made a point of the matter. Dennis, however, who felt himself somewhat the boss in his own craft, quietly said, "You may all look. I'll see to the course."

"Do you twig that dead cedar?" Leigh asked, pointing up the stream; "well, take the break in the bank there, and the red maple and that rock on the other side; you see? Let's work the boat back and forth only inside of these boundaries for the present."

This area so determined, the "Lovely Anna" began canvassing it rod by rod. It was a sacrifice for Dennis to sit upright in the waist of the boat rowing slowly, while Leigh and Pennington and Cyrus, the latter armed with a water-glass which he had borrowed from old Joe Bonnycross, all utterly forgot his presence in staring face downward over the gunwale. Sailing would here have been a hindrance and not a help, for, according to the understanding, at the command "stop" from any one of the three scrutinizers the boat was brought to the speediest practical standstill. Whatever suspicious object at the bottom of the creek had warranted the cry was then duly inspected.

"If the hull is here," exclaimed Cyrus, after they had come to two or three exciting halts which attention downward with eyes, and hooks attached to strong sounding-lines, had proved unnecessary—"if it is here, why in the world haven't lots of people, sailing up this creek, sighted her long before to-day?"

"Because," returned Dennis, "lots of people don't come sailing up the creek! There's no fishing; and strangers always go down to the Score and out to sea at their excursions."

"Besides," Pennington added, "folks of any sort have had no cause to be staring into the water, if they did come. Most people look at the sky and the scenery and attend to the craft when they are boating. I'm sure I do."

"It's queer how the town-people have kept out of the creek," said Leigh. "Just think how long we've lived here, and how seldom ever we fellows have come fairly up into its mouth, this way."

The speakers again resumed their oblique positions, and conversation again ceased.

"Dennis," Cyrus said presently, "I'll take your place awhile. It isn't really fair to cheat you out of all chance to snatch a sight of the ship. Give me the oars."

Cyrus was secretly discouraged, and the awkward attitude and hot September sun had given him a touch of headache.

"Thank you, Cy," Dennis answered, gratefully; and the two friends changed places.

All silent again. The "Lovely Anna", keeping strictly to her imaginary lines for a course, glided at a snail's pace over the still surface of the creek—over dark masses of sea-weed, suspicious shadows, jagged rocks, split ages ago by perhaps the identical earthquake which cut open the Score and made Lostwhittle Lake; above stretches of shining sand through which the rocky floor projected. Several times did Dennis or Leigh or Pennington call "Stop" to bring the "Lovely Anna" to a quivering standstill, and let them be sure that a deep hole in the strata, or a worm-eaten timber, or a collection of bowlders, was not the "Golden Moon."

It was hot work. In spite of their discovery ashore, their spirits slowly sank. Leigh relieved Cyrus. Pen came to Leigh's relief.

"I think that we had—had better give it up for today," Leigh remarked quietly, after three-quarters of an hour longer had brought nothing but fatigue. "What do you say, Cy?"

"Well, perhaps we had. The wind's going down. We may have to pull part of that long way to the Port."

"I'm tired enough without that," exclaimed Pennington. "Are you agreed, Dennis? Glory enough for one day, eh?"

But Dennis, who had not raised his head during these dispirited sentences, replied only with a "Stop", spoken so loud, and coming upon his companions so unexpectedly, that Cyrus nearly dropped an oar.

"I tell you, I tell you I have it!" Dennis cried, lifting a fiery-red and beaming face, his eye sparkling with excitement and the pride of perseverance. "There, there! Don't you see it? Stop! I'll hold the glass for you. Oh, it's the "Moon", sure, sure!"

Panics, joyful or fearful, are never easily describable. There was a panic on board the "Lovely Anna". It quieted down after every pair of eyes had beheld, beyond the possibility of doubt, a portion of the hull of a sloop, her deck and an open hatchway plainly identifiable, lying canted a trifle on her right side, in thirty feet of water.

Colonel Constantine had spoken the truth. The "Golden Moon" was a fact. Here she lay, just where she had sunk that chill November night to escape becoming the prize of the "Yankee Bride". And somewhere below that dark opening or another was stored the hapless young naval officer's golden legacy which might have been secured with her!

"It's share and share alike?" Leigh said as they were slipping gently homeward across the lake.

"Share and share alike," repeated Cyrus, conclusively. "That reminds me of something I meant to speak of before. If you are not all too tired, come over to my room to-night. We must decide how we are to get at all the treasure; and I have a proposition as to that, and another one besides, to bring up."

They agreed to be at Cyrus's "on time." What a day it had been!

#### **IV.**

#### **THE INVESTIGATION COMPANY.**

"You see," Cyrus explained, "we can't buy such expensive things as a diver's apparatus, and we couldn't use it unless we bought a diver with it; and there are none of the profession to hire about this neighborhood."

"Don't I tell you that my plan of lifting her straight up from all that rock and sand is the only practicable idea? A raft and the tide'll do it, and we can cut the trees down ourselves."

So collided Burrage's and Cyrus's ideas, as the four boys sat about the table, with its bright student-lamp, in Cyrus's big third-story room. The older people in the family were all at a wedding. The boys had the house to themselves and their discussions as to how the contents of the "Golden Moon" were to be recovered. It was well that there were no eavesdroppers, for their voices rose pretty loud.

It is over gold or something to do with gold that nine-tenths of the wrangling in this world starts. We should have hard work to get along without said gold; but, take it all in all, for stirring up discords, and cutting apart old friends, and generally setting the world agog, there is hardly its equal.

"I tell you, Leigh, there is not enough tide in the creek to do that sort of thing. I've read all about that scheme in a book I've got over there. It takes a strong tide; and besides that, we four fellows never could cut down trees enough and trim them—"

"And float them to the place and rig the tackle," interrupted Dennis. "No, never! Beside, a diver 'd be necessary if we tried that."

"I think we'd better give up trying to undertake this affair ourselves just here," remarked Pen. "I've come round to Dennis's way of thinking, a while ago. It's too heavy a job for us boys. For that matter, I think it's a pretty serious secret. Folks will respect us enough for having held our tongues and gone as far as we have without help."

"You all know what I feel about it," Dennis said, quickly but quietly, anxious to strengthen this new ally.

The secret of the "Moon" had grown to be a weightier burden with each hour, and he was more uneasy under it since he foresaw what it might entail upon them. He had met awkwardly the inquiries of the home circle concerning his pale face and abstracted behavior. When his father remarked at the dinner-table, "What's up, Dennis? You haven't laughed once in my hearing to-day!" Dennis somehow felt like a sneak in making some evasive excuse.

"Upon my word," sharply retorted Cyrus, "it is extraordinary to me, the eagerness of some fellows to get rid of standing on their own legs! Thank fortune, I can depend on mine! Here we are, all coolly and comfortably making up our minds as to how we ought to reap the benefit of this wonderful adventure; and here, at the same time, are you two, simply dying, like a pair of school-girls, to run and let the town know the whole business!"

"Thanks, Cy, but my father isn't 'the town', nor yours either!" Dennis said, sharply, wincing under Cyrus's shafts nevertheless.

"I didn't say he was! But the principle's just as silly. If you could give any decent, sensible reason for—"

"I did," said Dennis, in some indignation. "I say it again—I don't like secrets of such importance unless father knows them with me. A scrape of some kind is apt to come to any fellow if he's in such a fix. Second, I think that consulting our fathers is not to break our promises to—to Colonel Constantine, and won't be a breach of our honors at all. Last, we need advice, need it the worst kind of way. Just think, if we only had some experienced person here in this room this minute!"

"Well," said Cyrus, more coolly, "we've got that, or something next best to it."

"What?" queried Pennington.

"Who is he?" demanded Dennis. "Not you!"

"Joe Bonnycross," replied Cyrus, with an air of triumphant mystery; "and that's what I've been keeping back until you all were ready to act like independent fellows. Oh, I'll explain. That's why I wanted you to hurry up here to-night. The idea popped into my head as we came down the lake this afternoon.

"Between supper and the time you arrived over here I made a bee-line for Bonnycross. Oh, don't think, Dennis, that I did the very thing that I say you and Leigh are foolish to wish to do! I merely described the position of the hull to old Joe as if it was a situation I'd been imagining, or read in a story, and Joe got interested directly, and asked no questions. Says he, 'Well, Mister Barras, if that there vessel was subjeck to my operations, and the p'int was not to h'ist her up, *but* merely to lay hand on them cases, I know what I'd do!' 'What?' asked I. 'I'm

blest but I'd just drop a torpeeter into her, through that identical hatch you speak on, blow her up, and free the cargo. That is, always supposin' divin' was not to be for a instant considered, divin' bein' the only properest notion."

"How could we get a torpedo?" asked Pennington, after a pause, in which Cyrus met their glances.

"Get Joe to make it."

"You wouldn't know how to use it."

"Joe would set it off for us."

"Then Joe would have to be told everything," exclaimed Dennis, "and I'm sure that would be as much—no, a great deal more—a breach of honor than—than what you object to."

To say "telling our fathers" seemed a trifle babyish at the moment. Sensible expressions sometimes do.

"Joe need not be told at all—that is, anything of importance in the secret! I go to him and tell him that we want him to make us that torpedo, I forgot to say that Joe knows all about such things. He worked in some sort of a factory where they made 'em during the War. I tell him, too, that we want him to go somewhere with us and set the machine off for us, but that we can't in honor answer his questions. Pshaw! I know Joe. He'll just say, 'All right,' and set to work like a nailer; and then, when the day comes, up we sail with him, show him the old hull, and, presto! she's blown apart, timbers, cases, everything rises to the surface, or is visible below the water—the feat's accomplished. Why,

Joe'll undertake anything for the sake of having us fellows round him, so long as he can see his way reasonably ahead; and the little we will be able to tell him will be enough to satisfy *him*. Breach of honor! There's not a bit of a breach of honor, for we don't have to let slip a syllable about the "Moon", Colonel Constantine—anything."

"But the exploston itself," burst in Dennis, "is certain to be heard by somebody on the lake. That will attract attention to the creek, perhaps; and there may be all sorts of excitement, a crowd coming up to the place where we are working—"

"Very well," replied Pennington; "we can't help that, nor be responsible for it. Colonel Constantine allowed for that. He knew that the actual recovery of such a treasure by a handful of boys must make a stir as soon as it was a fact. Don't you recollect what he said just before he turned to Leigh with the sword? Something about 'circumstances making it impossible or useless for us to try to hide the secret any longer'? I do."

"Yes," Cyrus said, "of course that was meant just to cover such ground as this. We don't get into the papers 'voluntarily', nor stand and be congratulated 'voluntarily'. It's quite another pair of boots to go beforehand and whisper what we know or propose to do; yes, to whisper it to anybody."

"But Joe's scheme seems absurd to me," said Dennis. "Gold and silver are heavy, and those boxes will sink further, or be torn to pieces, and what is in them scattered down in the crannies of the bottom."

"Not a bit of it," Cyrus promptly exclaimed. "Joe says"—and so forth. The vigor of the old sailor's design hit Cyrus's fancy so smartly that he forgot that

Bonnycross's ideas often were brilliantly visionary. Old salts like Joe are apt to have loose notions in natural philosophy.

The reader will have observed that Leigh said less than the others since the mooting of this torpedo scheme. It was for a good reason. One bright Fourth of July, years back, just when they came to East Belleport, there had been a shocking accident in the Burrage family. If there was one thing, in consequence, which Mr. and Mrs. Burrage peremptorily had forbidden, it was their only son's "meddling with explosives of any kind or in any connection." As he grew up, their timidity rendered Leigh's celebration of our national holiday a tame affair. "But that was when I was a little fellow!" Leigh was saying to himself; "they wouldn't make a fuss about this now! I'm sixteen." Nevertheless, the edict had not been formally revoked, and Leigh had not attempted to so much as join the saluters on the Square on the morning of the last Fourth, by which act he would have discovered that, though no longer "a little fellow", the law was still intended to hold good over him. But he said nothing to-night except, "Well, it's too late now," to himself. There was enough friction in the quartet already, and he had rather argue with his conscience than Cyrus.

Upon Barras, or Jerrold, or Pen no such restrictions rested, Cyrus and Dennis always having leave to gun in the autumn; but even they were secretly startled at the formidable, not to say dangerous, engine so coolly recommended by the old arsenal hand.

Cyrus's further eloquence as he elucidated Bonnycross's opinions on the "torpeeter" and its efficacy nevertheless convinced Leigh and Pen that "Joe knew what he was talking about", and would be a mighty and discreet ally.

"So be it!" exclaimed Pen. "I'm in favor of Bonnycross's help. Let's go ahead."

Dennis sat leaning his head on his hands and staring at the floor. But he looked up now and said, with a dash of recklessness in his voice and heart, "All right, old man! I'm agreed, The 'torpeeter' it is."

If Dennis had held firm against Cyrus, Leigh would have admitted the situation which kept his own enthusiasm for it in check. As it was, he saw himself the only one looking askance at it. "Very good, then," he said, with a show of cheerfulness; "I don't see but what you have arranged it pretty thoroughly for the rest of us, Cy; but if you all say Bonnycross and the torpedo, I sha'n't hang fire. As you like!"

"Good!" Cyrus ejaculated, in the satisfaction of a natural manager of things who hates to see his plans fall through. "Now we're settled at last! The next thing is to raise enough cash for Joe to buy all the materials he told me about this afternoon. They aren't expensive. He makes the torpedo in a big iron can, or something like that. And then, don't you think that we ought to sign a paper—agreeing upon the shares we are each to have in the treasure when it is recovered? It seems to me that it would be more business-like."

"It might save disputes afterward," Pen gravely said.

So the amount which thoughtful Cyrus had asked Joe Bonnycross to name "in case any one wanted such a torpedo made, you know," was, with some difficulty, subscribed by the four boys, whom the "paper" which they presently put their heads together, stated, in quite a legal phraseology, as the stockholders of "The Chief's Foot Investigation Company; Dennis Jerrold, President, Cyrus Barras, Treasurer." The document in question declared that each member of the company should receive an equal share of the precious contents of the sunken

"Golden Moon"; and it also made a provision for a handsome reward to be paid to Joe Bonnycross for having ignorantly helped in the great undertaking.

Half-past nine struck in the church-tower across the Square. The Chief's Foot Investigation Company adjourned hastily. Cyrus agreed to visit old Joe before school in the morning.

"Dennis," Leigh said, as Pen's last "Good-night" echoed from the Harkness's front piazza, and the two lads walked onward together, "do you recollect what your father and mine said about secret societies and boys getting them up, that night we were all at your house?"

"No," replied Dennis; "what do you mean? Stop, though—I declare I do remember that evening, and what my father said, though I don't just what yours did." He walked a step or two in silence; then gave a low and expressive "Ph-e-w!" and added, in a troubled tone, "I declare I never thought of that! I wish to goodness I had!"

"So do I," Leigh echoed, stopping at his own gate. "It's too late now, I suppose." There was a hint in his tone.

No, Dennis, it is not too late; and if you were only as brave a fellow in some respects as you are in others, you would this minute give Leigh courage to act like a man with you!

One winter evening, when the Burrages had been at supper under Colonel Jerrold's roof, the conversation had turned on a secret society at a boarding school in the village, which had been caught in a grave offense. Mr. Jerrold looked across the table at the two boys, and said, "Mind you, Dennis, no secret

companies or societies of any kind for you—of any kind, mind you! Do your mischief independently, please!"

"The same to you, Leigh," said Mr. Burrage, nodding his head to his son. "In nine cases out of ten a boys' secret society means either knavery or folly. Just recollect that I taboo any such business for you, young man, until you're old enough to be your own master."

"Yes," responded Dennis now, in an off-hand fashion, to Leigh's question, "it's too late; and at any rate I guess they didn't refer to a thing of this kind—a company, not a society, you know. It's altogether different. Good-night. See you at school in the morning."

Dennis hurried on in the September moonlight, whistling, either to charm or drown his conscience. The fib to Leigh had quickened its pricking. That injunction of Colonel Jerrold's, "No secret companies or societies of any kind," was too explicit for any conscience in reasonably good working order not to take arms at once. It had been worse than "dodging"—and Dennis usually despised a "dodger"—for him to say what he did to Leigh.

Into what a network of, first, concealment, then deception, and now disobedience, and even so petty a trick as prevarication, had his "Golden Moon" affair gradually meshed him! He all at once found himself hating it—yes, positively hating it. Where, also, would its artfulness next beckon him? Would he ever be able to again recognize in his looking-glass "that frank, open-hearted boy of Jerrold's," as he had once blushing overheard a friend of his father call him?

## V.

### EXPLOSION.

It was Saturday morning, and the sun had been shining for hours on Lostwhittle's waters, when the "Lovely Anna", containing Dennis, Cyrus, Pennington, and Leigh Burrage, started rapidly toward the mouth of the creek.

Everything was ready. Behind the "Anna", as tow, came old Joe Bonnycross, sitting bolt upright in the stern of his skiff, the "Duckling". Attached to the "Duckling" by a rope, and thereby kept at a distance that Joe called "convenient" instead of "safe", glided a raft, roughly put together. Upon this raft, covered with a tarpaulin, something stood. It was the "torpeeter", over which, with all the enthusiasm of an artist, Joe had labored for the past few days. Joe watched its progress behind the two boats with an attentive and proud eye.

It was a miracle that such a naval procession quitted East Belleport and its dock region without attracting the attention of those on land, or the bargemen. It was like Venice wedding the Adriatic. But the "Lovely Anna", with crew and a luncheon-basket, was no new sight, and she called for Bonnycross at his own moorings at the end of his little garden on the outskirts of the town. There the tow was arranged. They hardly met a boat on the way up, and had now attained the deserted region of the lake.

Nobody felt like talking. Joe occasionally ventured a witticism from the "Duckling", or an observation about the bottom. The old sailor, as careless and fond of fun as his calling usually are, looked upon the whole affair as some mysterious little spree to be enjoyed with the lads, and "kept dark". Dennis was pale; Leigh and Pen mute as if made out of wood; Cyrus, a sudden victim of

nervousness; now that so much depended on a plan of his counseling, he looked at the waves as if asking from them advance information of "how it would end."

Bonnycross gave an exclamation of strong surprise when, after the disembarking on the shore of the creek, he was rowed out and made to see the open hatch of the "Moon" lying there below him in the crystal water. He was human, and poured forth a flood of questions, forgetful of all his promises.

"I'd no idee that there was reely anything of secha kind as this!" he repeated. "Come, now, what have you young fellers been a-drawin' an old idgit like me into helpin' along? That there is a good-sized craft—must be. However did she get on the bottom? Not since I lived hereabouts."

The quartet, although on the verge of disclosing the secret, contrived to soothe Joe and stand firm.

"Well," said Bonnycross, "I'm a man of my word! I said I'd do this job, and I will, but I mistrust that it'll fetch me and you inside of a jail before the month's out. Come, pull me back to the rock. The sooner I get the business over with the better. I see how to manage it, and my tackle's all right."

But no sooner were they all out of the "Duckling" again than Joe hobbled over to the spot where the raft was moored, and his tackle lying. Then he unkindly said, "Now, do you, every one of you, clear away from here, go into them woods, or do anythin' else you like! I won't have you round me while I'm a-meddlin' with these chemicals; that's the ticklish part of a torpeeter."

"Oh, Joe!" exclaimed Dennis and his mates, in appeal.

"No 'Oh, Joe!' about it," Bonnycross sternly maintained. "I want a clear deck and no watchin' or questions to bother me. Scamper, quick! Don't you dare to come closer than that log across there until I give you leave! Scoot, I say!"

Seeing argument to be useless, and that the Chief's Foot Investigation Company, like many other corporations, was at the mercy of the help it employed, the four boys reluctantly retired to the log. There they sat down in patient disgust.

"Why not spend the time in another hunt around Gladd's camp?" some one suggested. But the near approach of the climax of all their researches on land or water excited them too much for other explorations.

"No," said Dennis, "we'd better not go away from this spot now. Joe may be ready any moment."

"Do you think that the explosion will be heard at the Port?" asked Leigh, timidly.

"Don't know," came Cyrus's answer, almost sulky through suspense. "The whole thing may be in the New York papers by to-morrow. And look here, fellows, do you know what I want to do? I want to take some of the money that this stuff will fetch, and send Black Sam's boy down to New York to the hospital. Dr. Marquess told father that he could be cured of that hip-trouble there beyond a doubt, and to see him well would make Sam the happiest darky in the world."

There was a general exclamation of pleasure in this generous thought of Barras's.

"We'll put a tablet or a monument on the Chief's Foot, of course," Pennington suggested, "telling all about the recovery of the treasure."

"So we will!" was the common assent.

The inscription went under discussion immediately, merging into something like the inevitable dispute; further schemes followed. Altogether an hour or so, to which luncheon made a long appendix, lapsed quite durably. Then came Joe's voice summoning them nearer, as the sailor himself came cautiously toward them. They all sprang to their feet.

"Now, my hearties!" he exclaimed, with a gesture of order and silence, "we are all right for the explosion. Mind, now, wha' I tell you about where we are to go and what to do. This is a serious bit of experimentin', I allow, and I don't know that I'd come into it if I had got the hang of it first-off".

Almost as open mouthed as when listening to Colonel Constantine, Dennis, Cyrus, Pen, and Leigh closed nervously around old Bonnycross.

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Meanwhile, at Dennis's home in the Port a delightful surprise had occurred. Shortly after breakfast, Mrs. Jerrold glanced into the front yard and saw a tall young man marching up. He tapped on the window, smiling.

"Why, Norton Prall!" exclaimed Mrs. Jerrold, pushing open the French sash to admit the new-comer. "Of all things! What lucky event brings you here so unexpectedly? Sit down."

"It's a college holiday," laughed Norton, "and I thought I'd run down here and spend it with you and Uncle Ford and Dennis. Is Dennis around, by the way?"

"No, I'm afraid he isn't," replied Mrs. Jerrold. "He must have slipped off uncommonly quietly after breakfast this morning, probably to join Cyrus Barras or the rest of his set. Bridget gave him some sort of a luncheon, I know. However, he may come back early in the afternoon."

"Too bad!" said Norton, in disappointment, for he and Dennis were great friends. "Where do you think he has gone?"

"Fishing, I presume," replied Mrs. Jerrold, "or rowing or sailing somewhere on the everlasting lake. The boys seem mad about the water lately, though I don't observe that they catch many fish. His father and I have perfect confidence in Dennis, you know, so he lives in that new boat of his half the time."

Just at this moment Judge Jerrold came in, and hearty greetings between uncle and nephew followed.

"I'll tell you what, Norton," the Judge presently exclaimed, when Norton had been expressing his regret at missing Dennis, "I've a great mind to cut the office this afternoon, for a wonder, and take a boat with you and row up the lake, where I don't doubt we will meet the boys. I have a headache, and exercise in your company will cure it. What say you?"

"Delighted, I'm sure, uncle," Norton answered, gayly; "but I think curing your headache's more likely than running across Dennis and his crowd. The lake's a roomy place."

"Ah! but you see, Mr. Gartz, the expressman, I recollect, told me something about hearing the boys say they were going up to explore that creek beyond Ellis's Swamp, clear up the lake. He asked them, I believe, what they were in for to-day. Besides, we can tell the sail of the "Anna" a mile away. Mother, can't you put off dinner until we all get back together?"

Mrs. Jerrold answered this question by a bountiful luncheon, which was hastily eaten, and her husband and Norton hurried down to the dock in boating rig. Just as they passed the post-office Leigh Burrage's father stepped out and, nodding to Mr. Jerrold, said, "Ah, you're going to play truant from work, I see, Judge. How naughty!"

"Does that mean you won't accept an invitation to come along, Burrage?" Mr. Jerrold laughingly demanded. "Confess you want one. Come—it's a magnificent day, and my nephew, Mr. Prall here, and I are going wherever the lake will carry us. Join us, do. Your youngster and mine are somewhere up toward one of the creeks this afternoon, and we'll overhaul them, perhaps."

Mr. Burrage was taken aback by this startling proposal, but it proved so inviting that he presently found himself on board the "Surprise", Judge Jerrold's own comfortable skiff, and disputing like a schoolboy with the other two gentlemen the privilege of rowing it. It was difficult to tell who was in the highest spirits as the boat shot up the lake—Mr. Burrage making puns, the Judge telling stories, and Norton, I must admit, doing most of the pulling. The afternoon was truly lovely; all blues and greens, and sunshine everywhere, and an air as soft as the flutter of a lady's fan.

"By the by," Mr. Burrage said, after a moment's silence, "speaking of my boy, he seemed to me wonderfully abstracted and upset over some matter or other lately.

You say you haven't seen as much as usual of yours, Judge? Well, then, you couldn't notice, maybe, if he was in Leigh's little secret, whatever it is. If it hadn't been for this tiresome jury duty I'd have tried to find out from Leigh if his school, or what, has been growing a little too hard for him lately. The Academy begins so early, before the hot weather is fairly over! The lad looked really pale at dinner yesterday."

"Perhaps Lancaster is going too fast with the classes," responded the Judge. "I notice that both our boys have plenty of pride, and are apt to stand overstudy or any other worriment rather than seem whimperers. I've brought Dennis up never to keep a serious secret or trouble from me, and I've no idea that the lad could; but he isn't apt, on the other hand, to complain of trifles to me or any one. Norton, the boys are both always so confidential with you that, between this and Monday, suppose you try and find out what is amiss. I've thought Dennis's actions a trifle queer once or twice lately."

Norton assented. Some steady rowing soon impelled the boat within sight of the creek's mouth. So far, a sharp lookout had discovered no sign of the "Lovely Anna".

"We'll go up the creek a little way, if you care to," said Mr. Burrage, resting on his oars. "I've never been in it."

Skirting its east bank, they proceeded leisurely until the first abrupt turn of the watercourse was shutting out the look ahead—one of those sudden curves in the creek which had aided in misleading the unfortunate Captain Gladd, of the "Golden Moon". While the gentlemen enjoyed the stillness of the solitary spot and debated rowing further, a faint shout reached their ears.

"Halloa!" ejaculated Mr. Burrage; "did you hear that?"

"That's them, as sure as eggs are eggs!" exclaimed Norton, "They must be just on the inside of this point we're making. Shall we cheer?"

"No, don't," Judge Jerrold objected, hastily. "Let's steal on 'em, and surprise the whole pack. I dare say they're playing Indian, or building a log house."

The "Surprise" shot around the sharp point. Sure enough, the "Lovely Anna" was there, duly moored to the left bank of the wide stream, which broadened out before the tall Chief's Foot. On the bank Mr. Burrage and the Judge at once distinguished Dennis, Leigh, Pen, and Cyrus in a group. Norton discovered a fifth figure separated some distance from the lads—Bonnycross. Joe seemed to be holding out his hand, and had raised the other, as some species of signal, high in air.

"Old Bonnycross, I declare!" Mr. Burrage assured himself instantly.

What the "Surprise" party could not see was that Joe's horizontally extended hand held the fine copper wire communicating with the torpedo, already successfully submerged. The wire was for breaking the glass retort inside, and thereby freeing some sulphuric acid.

"What are they all standing so still for, I wonder!" ejaculated Mr. Burrage; "something wonderfully absorbing is in the wind, or they would hear us."

Just then the boys on the land did hear and did see the trio of gentlemen in the "Surprise". But simultaneously with their terrified cries of "Back—back! keep back! A torpedo—a torpedo!" and their frantic rush forward to warn Judge

Jerrold, Mr. Burrage, and Norton of the invisible danger, Joe Bonnycross gave the copper wire a quick jerk. Joe was deaf, and, standing with his back to the little cape, he considered it a very proper occasion to be entirely deaf, and that unexpected panic among the distant boys folly or fear, and paid no heed to it except an angry expletive.

The occupants of the "Surprise", like the man in the pantomime, never knew what happened to them until they were all through with it. A terrific explosion followed that motion of Joe's hand. A column of water, mud, stone, and gravel, and shattered timbers covered with sea-weed, leaped high into the air, and then descended like Titanic hail. Thrown out of their skiff by the tremendous concussion, but fortunately unharmed by the missiles, the three gentlemen rose to the surface of the creek and began swimming for dear life. "Norton! Burrage! are you there?" "Where are you, Judge?" were their first gasping cries amid the huge rollers.

On the shore the group of lads had been hurled headlong to the ground. Old Joe was scrambling to his feet already, groaning with alarm and the shock of his fall. The "Duckling" and the "Lovely Anna" were half swamped in the shallow. The terrified birds flew screaming from the tree-tops.

Drenched to their skins, and breathless, the party from the "Surprise" made the shore, and rushed toward Joe and the lads. Cut, bruised, and bleeding from the stones and jagged splinters which strewed the place where they had stood, Cyrus and Pen and Leigh were calling out some inarticulate phrases, and helping Dennis into a sitting posture. His eyes were closed from pain or half-consciousness. A huge fragment of timber from the river-bed had struck him in its descent.

"Oh, Dennis! Dennis! speak! You can tell us where you're hurt, can't you?" was all Judge Jerrold heard. He caught his son in his arms, and cried, in a voice the first tones of which were more like thunder than the explosion itself:

"In the name of heaven, what does this horrible business mean? Dennis, Dennis! my boy, open your eyes and tell me!"

## **VI.**

### **MOONSHINE.**

Dennis came slowly out of his swoon. He looked into his father's face. "Where are we?" he murmured. The sight of the other lads and an agony in his arm reminded him.

"Look out!" he gasped. "Something struck my arm, too. It's broken, I guess." Broken it soon proved to be. None other of the party was so seriously wounded.

"God be praised that we are all safe!" cried dripping Mr. Burrage. "Leigh, Cyrus, Harkness, tell us instantly the whole of this unaccountable affair! Leigh," he added, sternly, "have you forgotten my commands? See what your dishonesty has helped to do! Bonnycross, you're old enough not to be leading boys into such outrageous pranks! This is some wholesale way of fishing, I suppose!"

Old Joe, wiping the blood from a cut on his cheek, inflicted by a falling brace, pulled his forelock in speechless mortification, and shook his head while he stared at poor Dennis. The latter was "getting on his legs", physically, mentally, and morally, now.

The surface of the creek was crowded with floating timbers, dark with age. In spite of the anxieties to divert their attention, Cyrus, Pennington, and Leigh alike noticed that nothing resembling a bale or bag, broken or intact, was risen from the watery prison. Merely boards and beams, the fragments of a keel, and ribs and sheathing. It was very strange!

"I insist upon a full explanation from one or the other of you!" exclaimed Judge Jerrold. "This has been a serious affair. It's a mercy that death has had no share in it."

Mr. Burrage was wringing the water from his trousers and thinking of his ruined watch. Nevertheless, he looked up and said, "Wait a minute or two, Colonel! give the boys time to breathe and maybe get the mud out of their mouths."

There seemed so much to say when, a little later, the party were collected in the warm shelter of the Rock, Dennis lying on a pile of coats in the middle, while old Joe bailed out the boats, that the three gentlemen were at first utterly bewildered. Dennis insisted on doing most of the talking. "I won't mind my arm half so much, father, if you'll listen to me," he insisted, shame-facedly; the other boys gladly permitted him to be their spokesman. "We have been trying to blow up the "Golden Moon"," began Dennis.

"The "Golden Moon"!" repeated Mr. Jerrold, in deeper bewilderment; "is that the Chinese for creek-bottom?"

"No, sir. It's a ship, sir. A ship that was sunk here during the Revolution!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Burrage.

"A ship? The Revolution?" repeated the Judge, frowning. "Pray, has she been here ever since? Who told you of her? I'll be glad to know! Bonnycross, did you set these youngsters' wits astray, or they addle yours with this precious pothor?"

"—Colonel Constantine? May I ask who he is?" interrupted Mr. Jerrold again, after Dennis had faltered a few sentences more; "my dear boys, where *have* you been lately?"

"He's a man, sir," Cyrus explained, as Dennis's arm gave him a twinge that whitened his lips—"at least he's not a man, but a spirit, we think. We met him last week in the woods below Hawk's Hill."

By these opening stages of the explanation the two older gentlemen were fast awakening to the fact that this adventure of theirs, and the quartet's part in it, meant something entirely out of the average catalogue of schoolboys' pranks. It would have to be heard from the very beginning, or not at all. Accordingly, on Mr. Jerrold's suggestion, the unraveling of it was postponed until the boys had further cleared their faces and clothes from the mud deluge, doctored several cuts and bruises, and Bonnycross had put the fleet in order for returning down the lake. Dennis was laid at full length in the "Lovely Anna" on a pile of cushions. Norton, Joe, and Pennington occupied the "Surprise", which was tethered close to the "Anna". The empty "Duckling" came last, and the "Anna"'s large sail and a brisk wind rendered her fully equal to the tow.

The party being within all necessary earshot, Dennis began his story to his father and Mr. Burrage, Cyrus and Leigh assisting. How frequent were the cross-questions of the astonished gentlemen, and how increased their bewilderment with the answers, the reader can imagine. Neither Dennis nor his friends kept a single feature of the mystery or their action upon it from their audience, and both fathers grew more and more indulgent as to some of its details when they realized how high their sons' excitement had run.

To Dennis it seemed such a blessed relief to lie there, broken arm and all, and think that his father was again his confidant! "But, Judge Jerrold," insisted Cyrus, "Dennis wanted to tell you days ago, and so did Pen his father. I laughed them out of it. I was sure we could get along alone and win more honor by keeping mum."

"Well, never mind about that now, Cyrus," the Judge replied, kindly. "We all make mistakes in this world that bring more trouble on others than ourselves. But you're too young to be entirely independent; you know that."

When the boys had ended the history of the past ten days a silence ensued. Dennis looked up eagerly into Judge Jerrold's face. The Judge turned to Mr. Burrage with an expression of thorough mystification. "There are some things about this business that beat me!" he said, laughing.

"Without exception, the most extraordinary adventure I ever heard of!" exclaimed the latter. "The actual discovery of the hull, precisely where this Constantine bade them look! But there was nothing to be seen of any treasure upheaved by the explosion."

"Well," Dennis protested, with a gleam of faith in his bosom, "Joe said that we must come up and examine the bottom again when the water is settled."

"No cases nor that kind of thing were floating," Cyrus added, in a tone of disgust. "I'll bet you that Joe was all wrong in advising a torpedo. And I just heard him say that he must have got askew in his formula for constructing that machine. It was three times too powerful, I'm sure."

"Well, Master Cyrus, I hain't never used this ere nitro—nitro-glycerine before," Bonnycross called out cheerfully from the "Surprise". "I thought 'twas about the same as powder." Both the gentlemen exchanged glances in which consternation and amusement blended.

It became more and more delightful to the boys, even to poor Dennis, to sail along discussing the great secret in all its bearings and contradictions, with two wise and older heads. Ah! if they had only done so at first! No thought now of broken honor in confidences with Mr. Jerrold and Leigh's father! Moreover, the four were not a little pleased to find that the gentlemen admitted that their sons had had reason to place faith in the story of Colonel Constantine, and that he was a fairly supernatural mystery at the root of it.

"Boys, we will make a secret party of our own," proposed Judge Jerrold, "and view the scene of your meeting at Hawk's Hill, on Monday. Mr. Burrage and I will talk the thing over with your fathers this evening, Cyrus and Pennington. Will you consider us members of the Chief's Foot Investigation Company?"

"Yes, sir," answered Dennis and Barras, reddening.

Mr. Jerrold was not disposed to say anything at present to his son as to his disobedience and folly. He saw that Dennis had realized both, and was paying a dear penalty for them now. So was Leigh. "If you'll forgive me this time, father," the latter begged a little later, when they were alone, "I believe I'll never have to ask you such a thing again." The boy was a faithful prophet.

"Hullo there!" shouted voices close upon the flotilla, by this time nearing the middle of the lake. "Hullo!"

The party looked forward, to discover a fishing-boat approaching them. In it sat two men.

"Sam Bunkle and Tenny Pridget, as I live!" ejaculated Cyrus. "What has brought them so far out here?"

"Say, Mr. Jerrold! say, boys!" called out the old fisherman, Pridget, as he motioned to the "Anna" to slacken her speed, "hold up! D' you hear a wonderful curious noise, sort of explosion 't sounded like, up toward the creek a while ago? Been up that way? Sam and I here have been wonderin' and wonderin' what it might ha' been!"

Mr. Jerrold explained that the boys had been "trying a little scientific experiment."

"Xperiments, eh?" laughed Pridget; "well, all I've got to say, Mr. Jerrold, is that I wish you or somebody 'ud invent a experiment that'd h'ist an old hull out of the bottom of—"

There was so violent a sensation and cry from the boys that Pridget stopped short in surprise. "What's the matter?" he demanded.

"Look here, Pridget," Judge Jerrold said, "I wish you'd tell us anything you know about the creek or its bottom! We have a special right and reason to know, as it happens. What old hull do you mean? Did you ever hear of an old hull being there? Was a vessel lost? Or what? Boys, be still."

Pridget looked first at the Judge, then at Mr. Leigh, then at the boys, with an expression of reluctance, and yet great inward mirth. Then he grinned openly,

and answered. "Well, Judge, there wa'n't never no ship lost there that ever sailed—leastways none to my knowledge. But I guess I'm one of the few men livin' to-day who can tell you about my Grandfather Ketcham's odd notions and doin's. There's been a witness to 'em for a matter o' forty year, down on the bed of that big creek up yonder." Tenny laid hold of the gunwale of the "Anna" to keep near his audience. "I dare say a promise is a promise, and we was all sworn to hold our tongues at the time; but, my! there's lots of old folks, dead and gone to-day, who knew and told the story, half their lifetimes."

"You see, my Grandfather Ketcham was a queer man, and a dreadful smart man. He could turn his hand to 'most anything; and the year after he built his house and a windmill up on the east shore of the creek, where he lived till they was both burnt down—"

The boys again telegraphed general intelligence and mortification. "Captain Gladd's doomed camp!"

"—Well, that same year, he took it into his notions that he wanted a new kind of a sloop, and could build one himself out of his books. He'd quite a library for a farmin' man. So he got a lot of us together (I was only a young fellow at the time), and made us promise not to let on down to the Port that we were a ship-buildin' and not house-buildin'. He didn't want his boat to be copied afore 'twas patented, and besides the Port people 'd laughed at his conceits before this one."

"At last came the launchin' o' the hull, after we'd worked at her day in and day out—and all for nothin'. For the first time we got her slid into the creek—which wa'n't near so broad then, they say, as she is now—over she canted and went plump to the bottom. Grandsir was awful mad, I tell you. He spent a week tryin'

to h'ist her up. But t'was no good. And he was all the time in a regular panic for fear the Belleport folks would get wind of the story.

"What do you think he done on the first of the second week? Why, grandsir, he marches out of the house in the morning, and he blows his old horn, and then he stands up on that there big rock, near the point that they call the Indian's Foot, and says he to all of us: 'My good friends'—and he looked around on us kind of quizzical, for he was a clever man in spite of his crotchets—'I've come to the conclusion that there's no fool like an old fool—especially an old ship-buildin' fool! No man of us lifts a hand to that there hull again! Let her rot. Row home—and here's your wages for two weeks extra, provided you keep as still about what we've been tryin' to do—as *I intend to.*'

"As I've said, the story leaked out more or less afterward; but there's few remember anything about it now, and I dare say nobody'd ever suspect that grandsir once lived up there before he came back to the Port; or that the big foolishness he undertook is flat under the creek this minute. Eh! What's that you say?" Pridget eagerly asked, as Cyrus spoke. "A torpedeer? A *torpedeer*? Well, I never saw anything like boys for findin's and doin's. Likely you've blown her all to flinders! Come along, Sam, we must go take a look!"

Away went Pridget and Bunkle, in high glee. As they passed out of earshot, Mr. Jerrold and Mr. Burrage glanced from Cyrus and Leigh to Dennis and Pen. Norton was the first to burst out into a perfect cyclone of laughter.

## **VII.**

### **COLONEL CONSTANTINE'S LAST APPEARANCE.**

It was dusk by the time the "Lovely Anna", the "Surprise", and the "Duckling" reached the wharfs at East Belleport.

Dennis was suffering the severest pain by this time, and the least motion added to his torture. Mr. Jerrold and the rest helped him out of the boat, and the Judge ran hastily up the dock for a vehicle of some kind, in which Dennis was driven home with Norton and his father.

"For goodness' sake, boys," exclaimed Mr. Burrage, "let this be a lesson to all of you! I won't say anything further to Leigh or any of you, more than the reminder that you endangered your lives, and have been fearfully excited, over absolute foolishness—a shadow. Next time take your parents into your confidences, and let them chase the shadow with you."

Just as the group turned the corner leading to the Court-House and the Square, Cyrus remarked that a crowd was gathered at some distance beyond, with lanterns and torches.

"Let's hurry along," said Pennington; "it's right in our direction. An accident, perhaps!" And Pen and Cyrus darted ahead.

The crowd proved to be made up of all the rag-tag and idleness of the Port, with a good sprinkling of fishermen and stray passers, who were all packed together. An open carriage stood by the curb. Loud laughter, now and then, and the tones of some one with a gift for haranguing out of doors, reached the lads' ears next. But they gave vent to their own exclamations of dismay when they recognized

John Appleget, the Port constable, with a prisoner under his stalwart arm, standing patiently in the midst of the throng.

The prisoner was Colonel Constantine.

"Oh, dear, what now!" Pen gasped to Cyrus. "Where are Leigh and his father?"

Even in the uncertain light the boys noticed that the mysterious military man seemed the worse for wear since their last—and first—encounter. His uniform was torn and muddy, his hair a tangle, and he looked unshaven and as commonplace as some theatrical supernumerary walking abroad in stage costume.

"But, you see, gentlemen," he was proclaiming in a louder voice—"and I depend upon you to preserve the confidence inviolate, except for your own benefits—the "Yankee Bride" knew nothing of that sumptuous cargo. Captain Gladd, of the "Golden Moon", accordingly—"

"Oh, gracious!" cried Cyrus, in a half-whisper to Harkness. "It's he, of course, and he's telling the whole place this time, cats, dogs, and all, the very story he let us into with such secrecy. Ugh! The old fraud!"

"Don't speak so of the poor gentleman," came the voice of a stout Irishwoman who had overheard Barras's words. "It seems he's clane out of his poor old head this tin year! It's himself that was cunning to get away from his keepers!"

"Will you kindly inform me who this unfortunate man is, and where he came from?" Mr. Burrage asked quietly of Gartz, the expressman, who had reigned up

his horse by the edge of the Colonel's audience, and was calling out something to Appleget.

"Why, you see, sir," replied Gartz, respectfully, while the three boys stood arm in arm, staring now at him and now at the Colonel, "he's from Washingtonville, clear back of Hawk's Hill, where his folks have a splendid place, I'm told, and have taken the best of care of him. His name's Boldstone; old and rich connection, I understand, and had gran'fathers that fit into the Revolution. An' this old gentleman's been a great scholar in his day, and used to read and study so much about the Revolutionary War and the naval fights and the ginerals and camps that he became fairly crazy about 'em years ago. Appleget says that he wrote a long kind of a history of the war and the sea-fights; a puttin' into it any quantity o' battles and doin's and folks that never had no existence—'cept in his own poor head. But if any o' his sons or daughters dared to say that what he'd writ wasn't true, why, he'd storm and rage about like an old tornado."

What glances and nudges were already being exchanged between Pen and Cyrus and Leigh! Already the final disclosure of the day seemed to be understood, in advance. They were prepared for any commonplaceness now.

"But, you see," continued Gartz, who was somewhat proud of his gifts as a concise story-teller, "he finally got so queer, what with his talkin' an' his dressin' up in sech clothes as them he's got on now—that belonged to his grandfather, old Colonel Constantine Boldstone—"

"Gracious!" exclaimed Cyrus.

"—That they felt obliged to take keer o' his property for him, an' shut him up home, private-like, with a man to watch him; and just when they decided to do

that the old fellow capped the climax by gettin' it into his head that he wasn't himself, but that he was this very old gran'father, the Colonel, that Appleget kin tell you more about than I kin! He's managed to give his keeper the slip twice since they had him watched and kept under lock and key; but he hasn't done it lately, until last week, when he sneaked out one afternoon, dressed just like he is now, sword an' all. He'd sense enough to pack a little kind of a satchel full o' provisions. He set out an' must have walked ten miles the first night, until he struck a blind path in the woods, that fetched him straight across the mountains and down to the lake shore yonder." Gartz pointed just in the direction of the waving clump of tall pines and elms and Hawk's Hill.

"And what have his people been doing?" inquired Mr. Burrage, anxious that the trio of lads should there and then hear out the last paragraphs of a history which meant so much more to them than Gartz knew, or ever would know. The faces of the quartet were indeed a study at present. Mr. Burrage could hardly keep his own straight as he observed them.

"Why, they contrived to track him somehow. It seems he'd often visited the lake here when he was younger and sensibler. He used to be very learned in all the old war stories about the hill, too. So Clinton Stone, his keeper, and his son-in-law telegraphed over here, and they came over themselves early this morning. They got Appleget and rowed down to where the path I've spoke of came out by the shore. They had to be careful, for he's cunnin'—terrible cunnin'. But they found him, sure enough, half-starved, with his bag of victuals empty. Where do you think he'd been livin'? In the holler of one o' those big pines that's a-growin' close inside the beach. There's two of 'em there big enough to hold a couple o' men easy, an' he slipped out of one while they was standin' on the other side of it. So they collared him."

"We never once thought of looking at the trunks of those big pines to see if they were hollow," murmured Cyrus, in disgust unspeakable. "Oh, what will Dennis Jerrold say to this when we tell him?"

Gartz continued. "Without making any trouble the old man came quietly along with Appleget and the others, and the three came into the village this afternoon. There was a delay about the carriage sent for, so they've kept him entirely still in the station house, and now they're goin' to drive him back across country to Washingtonville. To look at his eyes and face, and hear his easy way of speakin', you'd really never think he was out of his mind a bit. He talks on most ordinary subjects perfectly natural-like, but any moment he's likely to begin to spout Revolutionary doin's, and then he'll spin, spin—such queer stories!—that he likely makes up as he goes along! Hullo—excuse me, Mr. Burrage, but I see the carriage is ready for 'em, and I want to speak to Appleget before they start. Good-by, boys." Gartz chirped to his horse and rattled off.

The boys and Mr. Burrage walked on in silence. Mr. Burrage struggled with his amusement, and contrived to ask, quietly, "Well, friends, does the Investigation Company feel that there is much of a field of work left for its activities? All things comes to those who wait, you know!"

The stockholders murmured some inaudible replies. As they passed the telegraph office the carriage containing "Colonel Constantine" and his captors overtook them and halted a moment, probably for his son-in-law to step out and forward a dispatch home. The Colonel leaned out of the window, and his glances fell upon the three boys, who stood in the strong light, staring at him one instant. He was not declaiming, and his full, dark eyes were fully as calm in their earnest expression as on a previous encounter; but they did not offer the slightest recognition to his former confidants. It was plain that he knew them

not, poor fellow! Possibly the reader may care to be told that it was his last escapade. The Colonel died in course of the next winter at Washingtonville, and among his papers lay a manuscript, dated about a month before the adventure of the boys below Hawk's Hill, containing a long and detailed history of the apocryphal "Golden Moon", and an inventory of her contents, with much more information concerning that imaginary chapter of our American Revolutionary history—showing that of all the poor "Colonel"'s delusions the "Golden Moon" had been the one deepest fixed in his bemuddled intellect. Full of it, he had come suddenly upon the lads that afternoon, and probably long after their departure he had been huddled contentedly in his pine tree shelter, reveling in visions of recovered treasure or other fancies just as satisfactory to that cracked and crazy brain.

. . . . .

It took the four boys all of the ensuing week to recover from the excitement and strain upon their young nerves which had been going on for so many days. Dennis's arm knit closely, but his autumn holidays were ruined, of course. Cyrus was especially kind to the invalid, and spent long hours with him. Somehow Cyrus felt that he had helped the folly of the "Moon" along more than any of the rest. It gave his pride a sound lesson. They could not discuss the affair for months without abusing themselves for their credulity. But it taught them all that there are few secrets or mysteries which a boy had best not share with his father, even at the expense of a broken promise. The four lads had only one satisfaction in their mortification—matters were so arranged that nobody knew of their adventure and undertaking except themselves and their four home circles. Even the torpedo made no noise in the gossip of East Belleport. If any confidential friend got wind of the affair he was so pledged that he would not think of betraying the funny story.

Oh, no, not a bit of it! Don't dare infer that what I preached boldly a few chapters back I am warping about now, so as to excuse a first-class breach! I have Dennis's express permission!

[THE END.]

Notes:

Transcribed from The Christian Union (vol. 31, issues 11-17).

Part 1: <https://books.google.com/books?id=HpldxOVzj4oC&pg=RA9-PA14>

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